1. NAME

COMMON: Community Building
AND/OR HISTORIC: Rowan County Courthouse (1855-1857 to 1914)

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 200 North Main Street
CITY OR TOWN: City of Salisbury
STATE: North Carolina

3. CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building</td>
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<td>Unoccupied</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>In Process</td>
<td>Being Considered</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: County of Rowan

STREET AND NUMBER: 202 North Rowan Street
CITY OR TOWN: Salisbury
STATE: North Carolina

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Rowan County Courthouse, Register of Deeds Office

STREET AND NUMBER: 202 North Main Street
CITY OR TOWN: Salisbury
STATE: North Carolina

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey
DATE OF SURVEY: 1934
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER: East Capital and Independence Avenue, S.E.
CITY OR TOWN: Washington
STATE: District of Columbia
EXCELLENT

GOOD

FAIR

DETERIORATED

RUINS

UNEXPOSED

ALTERED

UNALTERED

MOVED

ORIGINAL

Exterior: The exterior dimensions of the Community Building (Rowan County Courthouse, 1857-1914) are: length 85', width 50', and height 50 1/2'. The structure was constructed on a granite base, the exterior is cemented stucco on brick (which was originally blocked off to resemble stone), and the roof is covered with standing seam tin.

Rising from the stylobate, or the third approaching step which forms the porch, the six Doric columns begin with a large, substantial bottom, find their entasis, or slight, unnoticeable swell about half way up, and narrow gracefully towards the capital. Though of heavy proportions the columns are a dignified and delightful blending of strength and beauty. The flutings of the shaft end at the necking, or first band of the capital, instead of running up to the cushion-like echinus under the rectangular abacus as the ancient Parthenon. The rest of the front of the structure is severely plain. The entablature, the surface between the capitals and the triangular pediment, is, in this particular instance, simplicity itself. There is a plain band of perhaps a foot in width, the architrave, which is the first part of the entablature. Above this the frieze is decorated with triglyphs alone. These triglyphs, or rectangular stones indented with two large grooves, are spaced so that there are eleven in all—one directly over and one between each column. There are lain metopes, or rectangular spaces between the triglyphs, thus adding to the simplicity of the front as a whole. The entablature runs around the four sides of the building. To make the contrast between the entablature and the projecting cornice less obvious, the underside of the cornice is grooved in sections the size of the triglyphs, which are placed directly above and between each triglyph. The porch front inside the columns has two large windows, each with twelve rectangular panes of glass 18" x 28", which flank the central, double door on both sides. The same height as the windows, the door is the only entrance to the building. About two-fifths of the way up the front wall is a balcony which makes the division between the first and second stories. The balcony is of cast-iron grill-work, fashioned in a delicate lacy pattern, though quite simple in design. The windows and main door onto the balcony correspond in position to those on the first floor, with the exception that the windows have eighteen panes, thus being three feet higher, and the door has a false double-door above it to keep its equality in height with the windows. About two-fifths of the way up the front wall is a balcony which makes the division between the first and second stories. The balcony is of cast-iron grill-work, fashioned in a delicate lacy pattern, though quite simple in design. The windows and main door onto the balcony correspond in position to those on the first floor, with the exception that the windows have eighteen panes, thus being three feet higher, and the door has a false double-door above it to keep its equality in height with the windows. The sides of the building are quite plain—seven windows on the ground floor of twelve panes, as on the front, and seven corresponding windows on the second floor of eighteen panes. The simplicity of the windows is accentuated with a plain band of concrete sufficing at the top and bottom for little triangular or segmental pediments. Breaking the solid concrete-covered wall at even intervals with these majestic windows, adds to the general effect of Grecian simplicity, which is the architectural purpose of the building. Above the top windows is the entablature and then the cornice. The back of the building has a small annex tacked on, which was not included in the original plan. There are windows cut in the back on the first floor which correspond in position to those on the front and one on each side near the corners of the second floor, all in the same proportion as the side and front windows.
Thomas T. Waterman has described the mid-nineteenth century Classical Revival structure as "a temple-form building with long ranges of tall windows on the side elevations and a hexastyle portico on the front. The portico on the front is in the Doric order, with pediment and full entablature, but the columns are almost twice their correct proportion in height. The capitals are also increased in size, so they create a curious conflict of scales in the building."

At some period during its history an octagonal tower was constructed on the roof of the structure behind the triangular pediment. A clock was put in the tower, and a bell occupied the dome of the cupola. By 1898, the tower and clock had become seriously damaged by the weather and both were removed.

Interior: The interior plan of the structure includes on both sides of the central door, staircases leading up to the second story. An exceptionally wide hall goes straight through the middle of the building on the first floor with three doors on each side to bordering rooms. The three equally divided rooms on the right and left are approximately 19' x 22'. The second story is given over entirely to the auditorium and balcony. On reaching the second floor, steps on each side lead to the balcony and several broad curved steps in the center approach the auditorium. Inside the central door is the great hall measuring 48' x 64'. There are sixteen semi-circular rows of seats with chairs for approximately three hundred people. Supported on eight columns at the rear of the auditorium is the balcony with ten long benches, which seat approximately seventy people. On reaching the balcony, a narrow flight of stairs lead to the empty triangular space behind the pedimented front. The interior finish of the structure is plaster over brick.
Soon after Rowan County was established in 1753, Salisbury was designated as the fourth site in the colony where the "General Gaol Delivery" or Supreme Court was to sit. For this essential role in the colony the newly established town sought to erect a building at the intersection of Main and Innes streets that was of frame, weatherboarded, and a story and a half high. The structure was completed in 1756. The High Court heard cases in Salisbury for Western North Carolina and was presided over by attorneys for the King as Edmund Fanning, John Frohock, and Abner Nash, a later governor of North Carolina. Daniel Boone appeared in this court as a defendant in several minor cases. William R. Davie, founder of the University of North Carolina, practiced here, and Andrew Jackson received his license to practice law in the courthouse in 1787. In 1771 the Colonial Assembly ordered a new courthouse to be erected due to the "ruinous condition" of the original structure. A board of commissioners was appointed in 1781, but it was not until 1800 that the second structure was finally completed to replace the original. Fifty years after the erection of the second courthouse the county commissioners in the term of the 1854 session made inquiries into the necessity for building a third, more modern and commodious courthouse. In August of the same year D. A. Davis, John I. Shaver, Paul O. Sifford, David Barringer, and O. G. Poard, members of the committee, ordered that the county undertake the construction of a new courthouse on the grounds where the Jail and Clerk's offices were situated. In October advertisements were printed seeking bids for materials for a building 50 feet wide, 85 feet long including the portico with a foundation of granite. The specifications called for walls of brick and a roof of tin. Messers. Conrad and Williams were the contractors, and in praise of the builders the editor of the local newspaper stated that they were "erecting a magnificent structure which when completed will be another monument--of their artistic skill and ingenuity as builders." They had previously constructed the Lunatic Asylum in Raleigh and the Female College (Mitchell) in Statesville. By the end of 1855 the new courthouse was roofed and nearly ready for occupancy. So impressed were Rowan's neighbors that Guilford County asked the committee to furnish information to design their new temple of justice. The new Rowan courthouse was formally dedicated early in 1857, and the editor of the Carolina Watchman called for the installation of the old town clock given to Salisbury by General John Steale when he was controller of the U.S. Treasury. The town clock occupied the belfry until after the Civil War when in 1866 a bell was presented to the town and hung in place of the clock. Reputable lawyers and statesmen of the day appeared before the bar of the new courthouse. Judge John W. Ellis, soon to become governor of North Carolina,
8. was the first superior court judge to preside in the new building.
Burton Craig, lawyer and congressman, who later introduced the Ordinance of Secession that took North Carolina out of the Union practiced in the building as did Judge David F. Caldwell, William C. Love, and Nathaniel Boyden, North Carolina Congressman and Supreme Court Justice. In 1912 agitation to construct a new court center due to the extremely poor acoustics in the 1855-1857 courthouse was inaugurated in the county. "It is extremely painful to listen to a speaker in that room" wrote the editor of the Carolina Watchman, "and almost impossible to understand him." In 1914 a new courthouse was dedicated to replace the 1855-1857 one. And, in July of the same year the county board influenced by a committee of prominent citizens elected to use the Classical Revival Courthouse as a Community Center. The building was repaired and used as a headquarters for several county-wide organizations, and in addition, since 1914, the offices of Rowan County have gradually moved back into the structure for lack of office space in the courthouse structure completed in 1914.

Thomas Waterman has called the third Rowan Courthouse a work of "real monumental quality--quiet and dignified," and "an interesting attempt to use the classic orders to give monumental quality without impractically heavy shafts." The structure is considered by architectural historians to be a prize landmark of the classical revival in Western North Carolina.
### Major Bibliographical References

- **Rowan County Records**, Rowan County Courthouse, Salisbury, North Carolina. Office of the Clerk of Court (Sub-group: Court Minute Books).
- **Saunders, William** (ed.) *The Colonial Records of North Carolina* (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 10 volumes, 1886-1890, V, passim.)

### 10. Geographical Data

#### Latitude and Longitude Coordinates

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<th>Corner</th>
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**Approximate Acreage of Nominated Property:** Two-thirds of an acre

**List All States and Counties for Properties Overlapping State or County Boundaries**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Code</th>
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### 11. Form Prepared By

**Name and Title:**
Raymond F. Pisney, Assistant Administrator, Historic Sites and Museums

**Organization:**
North Carolina State Department of Archives and History

**Street and Number:**
109 East Jones Street

**City or Town:**
Raleigh

**State:**
North Carolina

**Date:**
Feb. 16, 1970

### 12. State Liaison Officer Certification

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

- National [ ]
- State [ ]
- Local [ ]

**Name:**
H. G. Jones

**Title:**
Director, North Carolina State Department of Archives and History

**Date:**
February 16, 1970

### National Register Verification

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

**Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation**

**Date:**

**Attest:**
Keeper of The National Register

**Date:**
Community Building (Rowan County Courthouse)

200 North Main Street
Salisbury, North Carolina

U.S.G.S. Topographical Map
Salisbury Quadrangle, 7½" 1962

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
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</thead>
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<td>degrees minutes</td>
</tr>
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<td>35° 40' 06&quot;</td>
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35° 40' 00"